

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

H.B. NO. 5044 An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017

Good Evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Chantal DeArmitt, and I am a registered voter in the city of Middletown.

I am here to testify on H.B. No. 5044 An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year 2017.

I am opposed to any reductions to current mental health services and supports. I want our state's mental health care service system strive to provide the care and supports I had, enough core resources to give children, adolescents and adults with psychiatric and behavioral conditions identified and helped as early as possible in their lives. I have lived with a mental health disorder since my late 20's. I am now in my late 60's. Fortunately, I was able to obtain the medications, treatment and other supports that I need and will need throughout my life. This has enabled my recovery sufficient to obtain a Master's Degree in Public Health at Yale University School of Medicine and have a 40 year career in health services administration. I currently work for a regional mental health board because I strongly believe in their mission to assure citizen volunteers a role in reviewing and evaluating the services in their communities, and to recommend improvements to the Commissioner and the Legislature. As you know, the 5 regional mental health boards were established by law 41 years and are instrumental, and exceptionally cost-effective, in improving CT's mental health system.

History and data clearly demonstrate the impact on individuals, families and their communities if these devastating financial resources are withdrawn from DMHAS, you will see increased: use of very expensive emergency services and hospitalizations, homelessness, use of and addiction to alcohol and illegal drugs, incarceration, suicides, school drop-out rates, and difficulty obtaining and maintaining gainful employment. All of these negative impacts affect our economy in many ways.

The cost-effectiveness of community-based services has been impressively documented for a long time, especially as CT made increasing investments in treatment, access to medications, housing with wrap-around services, a variety of rehabilitation and peer-support programs, and other components of CT's mental health service system. Such services effect recovery and one's ability to maintain it. These services help Individuals to develop and reach personal goals, thus improving their quality of life and positive participation in the life of their communities. I have seen incredible improvements in all aspects of our service system since 1983 when I began working in our state service system.

Please continue to preserve at least current service levels look for innovative ways to make your reductions and to seek revenue enhancements.

Thank you for your time and attention. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The long-term outcomes from at least maintaining current service levels are worth every penny of investment. Please continue to look for innovative ways reduce expenditures in other less vital areas.

Thank you for your time and attention.